



The Division of Agriculture Activities

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Find us on the web at:
<http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag>

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In This Issue

- [Director's Note](#)
- [Agriculture Calendar](#)
- [An August Packed Full of events, celebrations, and promotions](#)
- [Lessons from Denver Public Schools Farm-to-School Program](#)
- [Planning for more On-Farm-Food-Safety Workshops](#)
- [Hay trials underway at the PMC](#)
- [PMC Rain Garden Installation](#)

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Questions or Comments?
E-Mail or call 907-761-3864.

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Directors Note

Alaskan agriculture has gotten some attention this past month with two separate farm bureau tours and several news articles. Staff reported that the Delta Farm Bureau Tour was a hit – with many interesting stops and good attendance. The Mat-Su Farm Bureau hosted their annual tour this past week and had 90+ in attendance. The skies cleared for the day and the group enjoyed fabulous weather as they visited five different farms. This interaction is the ideal setting to educate the consumer on the benefits of buying local and what the Alaska Grown logo is all about. If your area is interested in hosting a farm bureau tour and would like some assistance, please contact the Division office.

Another event showcasing Alaska Grown is the Mat-Su Governor's picnic on August 10th. The Governor's picnic will be serving Alaska Grown products, from pulled pork sandwiches to local ice cream, and will be held at the Alaska State Fairgrounds, Raven Hall. More information about the Governor's picnic can be found at gov.alaska.gov/parnell/multimedia/governors-picnic.html. For those in the Interior, check out the 'Arts in the Park' event, August 24th - 26th at the Chena River State Recreation area, which will feature an Alaska Grown Dutch Oven Cook Off. More details can be found at dnr.alaska.gov/parks/asp/chenartinpark.pdf.

I found it interesting that the latest research results from Solstice Advertising and Craciun Research show that while the Alaska Grown Logo is well recognized, it is not always understood as pertaining to Alaska produced products. The tours, articles and events listed above continue to educate the general public about the Alaska Grown program and locally produced products.

Although it is important to continue our outreach and education to the consumer, it is also important to recognize the local retailers who continue to support local production and carry Alaska Grown items. Next time you go to the store, be sure to not only "look, ask, buy Alaska Grown", but also thank your local retailer for carrying Alaska Grown. As always, please give me a call if you have any particular comments or concerns. You can reach me at franci.havemeister@alaska.gov or (907) 761-3867.

-Franci Havemeister

"Agriculture probably required a far greater discipline than did any form of food collecting. Seeds had to be planted at certain seasons, some protection had to be given to the growing plants and animals, harvests had to be reaped, stored and divided. Thus, we might argue that it was neither leisure time nor a sedentary existence but the more rigorous demands associated with an agricultural way of life that led to great cultural changes."

- Charles Heiser, Seed to Civilization

Agriculture Calendar

- ▶ **Thurs. August 9th:** **Alaska Agriculture Day at the Farm ; Palmer**
Details: [here](#).
- ▶ **Fri., August 10th, 4 - 7pm:** **Governor's Family Picnic; Alaska State Fairgrounds**
Details: [here](#).



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- ▶ **Thurs. - Sat. August 9th - 11th:** **Alaska Peony Growers Summer Conference;** Palmer
Registration [here](#).
Questions: apga.events@gmail.com
 - ▶ **Fri. - Sun. August 24th - 26th:** **Arts in the Parks / AK Grown Cookoff;** Chena Hot Springs
Details: [here](#).
 - ▶ **Wed. Aug. 29th, 1:00 pm;** **Board of Agriculture & Conservation Meeting;**Palmer.
Teleconference: (800) 315-6338; Passcode: 122#
Details: [here](#).
 - ▶ **Thurs. August 30th:** **Alaska Grown Day @ the Alaska State Fair;** Palmer
Wear your Alaska Grown shirt for \$2 of your entrance ticket
- If you have an event that you would like to add to the calendar, please contact [Lora Haralson](#).*

Marketing Section

An August packed full of Agriculture events, celebrations and promotions

A number of Fairs throughout the State take place in August, many of which are hosting special events to celebrate Alaska Grown. Find a full list of statewide fairs at www.uaf.edu/ces/.

- If you plan to attend the Palmer State Fair, make sure it's on Alaska Grown Day, Thursday, August 30th. Wear your Alaska Grown shirt for \$2 of your entrance ticket purchase!!!
- The Palmer Center for Sustainable Living will host Alaska Agriculture Appreciation Day on Thursday, August 9th. There will be fun activities for kids, farm and lab tours and much more.

- Interested in peony production? The Alaska Peony Growers Association summer meeting takes place August 9-11th in Palmer. Find more information at dnr.alaska.gov/ag/CALENDAR/2012PeonyAgenda070312.pdf

- The Division of Parks & Outdoor Recreation will include an Alaska Grown Dutch Oven Cook-Off in their August Arts in the Park event – find out how to participate at dnr.alaska.gov/parks/asp/chenartinpark.pdf.

The marketing section's home page is located at dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_ms.htm. You can also follow Alaska Grown on Facebook, at facebook.com/dnr.alaskagrown.



Photo: Amy Pettit | AK DOA

Like Peonies? The Alaska Peony Growers Association summer meeting is August 9th - 11th in Palmer.

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Alaska Farm-to-School Program Update

Lessons from the Denver Public Schools Farm-to-School Successes

On Sat., July 14th, Staff from the Division of Agriculture had the opportunity to tour farm-to-school programs at Denver Public Schools. We were able to meet lead administrators that have put in place a quality program that remains financially viable. Discussion centered on food safety protocols, assessing food service equipment requirements, and coordinating the menu with the crops. We also were introduced to a couple of different models and the way they have been able to work the foods into the school meal programs.

Model #1

An outside professional full service agricultural construction and operation firm, Agriburbia, worked out a contract with the Denver Public School District (DPSD) to design, farm and transport food products to a central warehouse. They also handle distribution to the individual schools. The contract was modeled after a 'mowing service' contract and then tailored for this purpose.

In the contract, Agriburbia handles all aspects of the school farm and is paid a price that is equivalent to what the district would have paid their normal vendors for the products. Protocols were developed to address food safety and expectations for every step of the process. One notable feature of this model is that the students had separate gardens for learning and the school farm was ONLY for cafeteria production.



School farm managed by Agriburbia

Model #2

This model was specific to a single school that wanted to incorporate school garden produce into their school meal program. The school is designated as one of DPSD's "Innovation Schools" intended to teach students to focus on carbon footprint reduction, environmental & social sustainability.

In this model, the school partners with a non-profit producer, Sprout City Farm,

which has an emphasis on community involvement. The farm provides one full-time and one part-time staff member, and volunteers make up the balance of the workforce. Combined, they put in 200 hours per week of labor. The farm also has a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program that provides food to 65 families from the school and community each week.

Similar 'Learning Gardens' outside of the farm production area are set aside for educating students. Harvested produce is weighed and sold to the school cafeteria at a price consistent with what the school would normally pay a food vendor.



A representative from Sprout City Farm tends to Denver Green School's farm plot

Key Lessons Learned

- Different models exist that will work for large, medium, and small districts/schools, based on the capabilities & needs of the school and available community resources.
- Pricing is a concern for buyers and producers. A good starting point is to match what the school currently pays and then revisit this as necessary.
- Working with the school district administration and school food service staff helps to ensure all concerns are properly addressed.

For Farm-to-School updates, news, grant opportunities and announcements - join our listserv at: [list.state.ak.us/soalists/akfarmtoschool/jl.htm](mailto:state.ak.us/soalists/akfarmtoschool/jl.htm). You can visit the Farm-to-School facebook page at: facebook.com/AlaskaFarmToSchool.

For information about the Alaska Farm-to-School program, contact Johanna Herron at Johanna.herron@alaska.gov or (907) 374-3714.



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Pest Detection / Inspection Section

Attention Producers - More On-Farm-Food-Safety Workshops in the works

In June 2012, representatives from the Division of Agriculture's Inspection section and Farm to School Program hosted a two day "On Farm Food Safety" workshop in Fairbanks.

Seventeen people representing 12 different farms learned about Good Agricultural and Handling Practices (GAP/GHP) Audits, Risk Analysis of Water Sources, Creating a Food Safety Plan with FamilyFarmed.org's new online tool, and a variety of other post-harvest handling topics. If you are a producer or vendor, small or large, and are interested in food safety issues, this workshop is for you. Comments from participants at the first workshop included:

"Great at answering our questions right away with a very diverse group"

"Very helpful – knowledge is power to move ahead in the right direction"

Division of Agriculture staff are now considering offering this same free workshop in the Mat Su area later this year, and we would appreciate your input. If you are interested in attending a similar workshop in

Palmer or Wasilla, please let us know:

1. Would you be interested in participating in this workshop?
2. Are you also interested in information about food processing? (If there is interest, DEC personnel may also be available to assist with the workshop)
3. Would you prefer the course be offered as:

A fall workshop that includes a visit to a local farm to do a mock GAP/GHP audit?

-OR-

A workshop only, held in the **winter** (Jan - Feb), in conjunction with the Potato / Vegetable Growers Conference

4. Would you consider hosting a tour of your farm as part of the workshop, where components of a mock GAP/GHP audit would be conducted?

Please provide your input to Barb Hanson at the Division of Agriculture. She can be reached at barbara.hanson@alaska.gov or call (907) 761-3854.



Barb Hanson demonstrates a mock Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) audit with Gretchen Kerndt at Basically Basil Farm



The first On Farm Food Safety Workshop had representatives from several farms, UAF Cooperative Extension, and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation.



Sanitation is key to safe food handling on the farm.



Using an outdoor handwashing station is a good agricultural practice.

Plant Materials Center

<http://plants.alaska.gov/>

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Plant Materials Center

PMC Begins Hay Production Trials

The Plant Materials Center started hay production trials this summer, to study the performance of native grasses against non-native varieties such as brome and timothy.

In addition, test plots are being developed to analyze yield production and relative

feed value for several native grasses and legumes. Fertilization requirements will also be studied in these trials.

For more information about the hay trials, contact Casey Dinkel, at (907) 745-8108 or Casey.Dinkel@alaska.gov.



Photo: Brennan Veith Low | AK PMC

The Plant Materials Center produced hay this season, in support of ongoing nutrient analysis and yield trials

Rain Gardens at the Alaska Plant Materials Center

The PMC, in cooperation with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB) is installing a rain garden. A rain garden is a collection of deeply rooted native plants that is positioned near runoff water sources such as a downspouts or roadways. The PMC's rain garden will serve as a demonstration plot for homeowners and farms in the area.

Rain gardens capture rainwater and melting snow that would otherwise flow into roadways and drain into rivers and streams. Untreated runoff can transport contaminants such as fertilizer, oil, pesticides and

other chemicals into freshwater sources.

The densely packed plants in the PMC's rain garden will break up any pollutants and render them harmless, providing additional habitat for birds and beneficial insects. In addition to improving water quality, rain gardens also reduce erosion and flooding potential.

For more information about the MSB rain garden program, contact the Planning and Land Use Department, at planning@matsugov.us.



Photo: Brennan Veith Low | AK PMC

Matanuska-Susitna Borough staff prepares the ground for a rain garden